

Community Update on Cancer Inquiry
Cameron, Missouri
October 9, 2008

What we looked for

We looked to see if the Cameron area of northwest Missouri has a higher occurrence of brain and other central nervous system (CNS) tumors or cancers when compared to the state of Missouri. Because Cameron's zip code crosses into four counties, the inquiry focused on residents living in Caldwell, Clinton, Daviess, and DeKalb counties.

How we looked

We compiled data from the Missouri Cancer Registry (MCR) for brain and CNS cancers from January 1, 1996 to June 30, 2008. Benign tumors became reportable in 2004, so the time period covered for them is January 1, 2004 to June 30, 2008.

Tumor registrars across the state and referral hospitals outside the state worked with the Missouri Cancer Registry to conduct a Rapid Case Ascertainment (RCA) to help identify more recent patients. RCA is a process that speeds up the gathering of Cancer Registry information, beyond what is required by state guidelines, to assist in inquiries of this nature.

Community members also participated by sending in Patient Information Forms to provide information on diagnoses they or others may have had.

All sources of information were reviewed, verified, and checked to see if they met the criteria for the inquiry.

What we found

- The occurrence of new brain tumors or brain cancers in the 4-county area mirrors that of the state of Missouri, which is similar to national data.
- There is an increase over time in the reporting of brain tumors or brain cancer in the area, as well as in Missouri, and the nation.
- Brain tumors and cancer ranked 6th out of all cancers diagnosed in the state of Missouri. Brain tumors and cancer ranked 10th in the Cameron area.
 - Missouri: lung, female breast, prostate, colon and rectum, and urinary bladder cancers, brain tumors and cancer, Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma, melanoma of the skin, kidney and renal pelvis, corpus and uterus.
 - Cameron area: lung, prostate, colon and rectum, female breast, urinary bladder, kidney and renal pelvis, leukemia, corpus and uterus, Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma, brain tumors and cancer
- When looking at specific age groups in the Cameron area, the occurrence of brain tumors and cancer was slightly higher in the 0-19 year old age group and much lower among people 75 years of age and older when compared to the state of Missouri.
- In terms of mortality, there was a slight increase in death due to brain cancer among the 0-19 year old age group from the Cameron zip code when compared to the state of Missouri. DHSS cautions that this finding is based on a very small number of cases over an 11.5 year time period.

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In fact, there were so few cases in this age group that one fewer case would have resulted in a mortality rate that is not different from the overall state rate.

- No differences between the Cameron area and the state were found for overall cancer occurrence or overall cancer mortality.
- Because of community interest in environmental radon, lung cancer occurrence and mortality was measured, with higher rates of disease found in Clinton county for people 20-54 years of age and higher rates of disease for people 20-34 years of age in Daviess county. Because tobacco use is a major risk factor for cancer the Missouri County Level Study released at the beginning of the month is a good source of current information on tobacco use, cessation, and secondhand smoke exposure.

Where we go from here

Because some community members are still being medically evaluated and need time for this work to be completed, DHSS proposes for the Missouri Cancer Registry to continue to collect data from this area. A new analysis will be completed in one year to determine if any clustering is apparent or if any trends change. DHSS will continue to remain aware and engaged in this situation and is willing to review and respond to any new information that could affect the health and wellbeing of Cameron-area residents.

What you can do now

While we fully understand the concern Cameron-area citizens have about brain tumors and cancer in this area, we hope that these findings will ease at least some of that concern. At the same time, we encourage everyone to work closely with their healthcare provider to answer questions, address concerns and to seek medical assistance when deemed necessary. It should be noted that, according to brain cancer experts, it is not advisable for individuals to actively seek out imaging studies, such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), as a precaution or when there are no symptoms to warrant it. These types of procedures use radiation, which can actually increase a person's risk of brain tumors or brain cancer. Again, we strongly encourage anyone with health-related concerns to work closely with their healthcare provider.